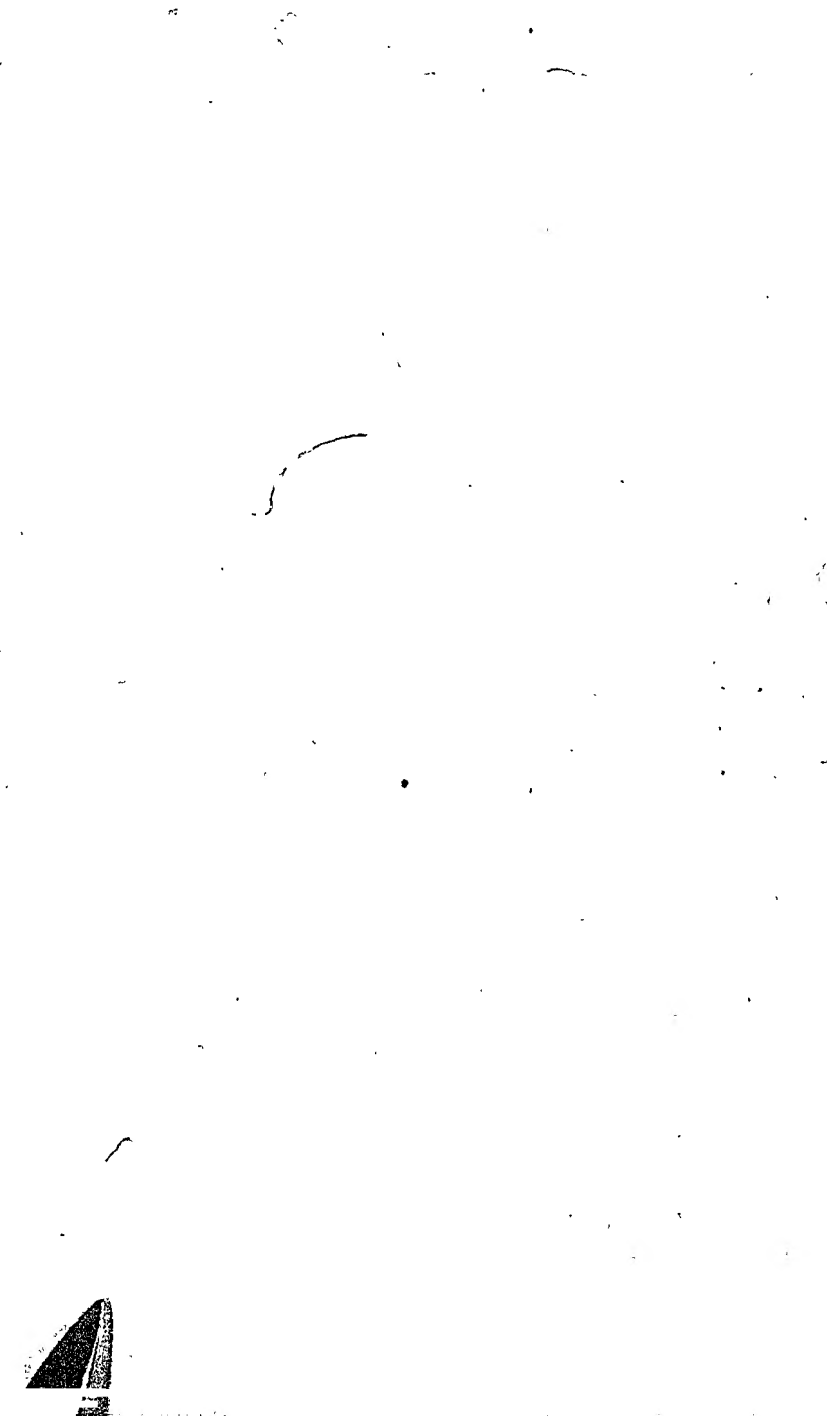


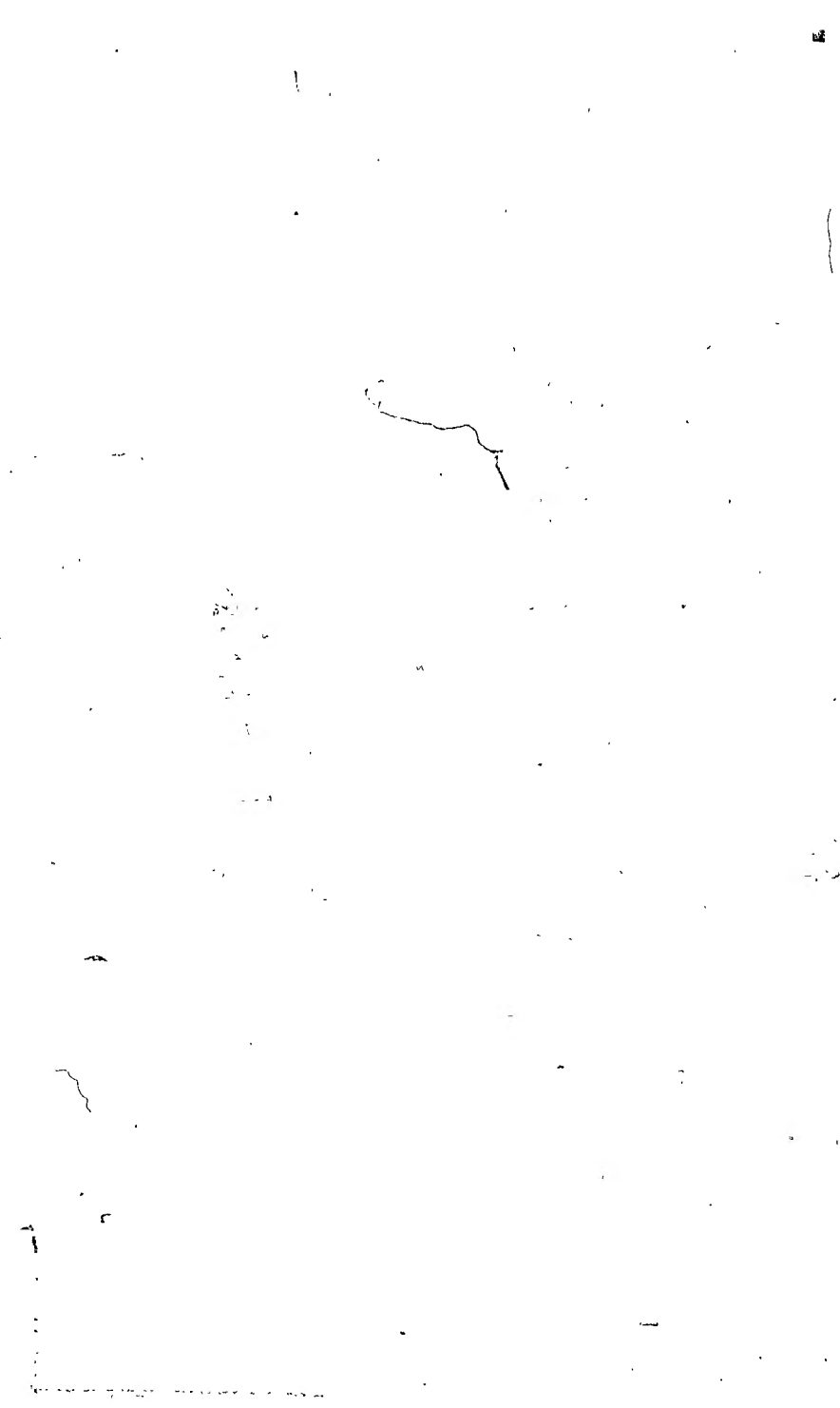
# MY KITCHEN WINDOW

JACQUES

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## MY KITCHEN WINDOW



# MY KITCHEN WINDOW

EDNA JAQUES

AUTHOR OF

*"Drifting Soil" and "Wide Horizons"*



TORONTO  
THOMAS ALLEN  
1935

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LOVINGLY DEDICATED TO  
MY DAUGHTER  
JOYCE

*For the vision and the road  
Were his glory and his goad,  
Rapture far beyond his speech,  
Heights he never hoped to reach:  
But they beckoned him . . . and so  
All his hungry heart must go.*





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## My Kitchen Window

My kitchen window is above the sink,  
With dotted curtains looped in tiny folds,  
A frame for mountains and a bit of sea;  
And all day long it glows and shines and holds  
A hundred pictures for my heart's delight—  
People who hurry by . . . and stars at night!

What matters if my work be drab and dull  
So I can lift my eyes from pots and pans  
And see a mountain etched against the sky,  
A fleet of clouds like shining caravans  
Setting their course for harbors dim and far  
In some vast haven where the blessed are?

I don't mind making pies and loaves of bread  
If I can look out from my window high  
And see a little girl with flying hair  
Poised on a scooter as she dashes by—  
Such breathless, sunny joy her heart must know  
Seems leaven for a whole wide world of woe.

So my small window with its curtains prim  
Brings all the world aknocking at my heart:  
A mother passing by, a priest, a child,  
Makes me in tiny rooms a living part  
Of all this glad, good earth, and makes me kin  
To all the glory that has ever been.

## Watching at Windows

I like to watch from windows—  
There's, oh, so much to see!—  
The silv'ry spire of a church,  
A budding lilac tree,  
A little girl on roller-skates  
Who turns to wave to me.

I like to watch from windows  
When maple leaves unfold,  
And daffodils against the fence  
Are cups of purest gold.  
A mother sits and watches; too,  
Her face, serene and old.

I like to watch from windows—  
There's always something new:  
A neighbor walking home from town,  
Who stops to chat with you,  
And wishes in a wistful voice  
That she had such a view.

I like to watch from windows—  
There's something clean and high  
About the sweep of purple hills  
Against a morning sky  
That calls and whispers to my heart—  
I cannot tell you why.

## My Work-Bench

My work-bench is a kitchen sink,  
The table where I mix my bread,  
A kitchen stove . . a set of shelves,  
The wide, white bosom of a bed,  
A woodbox filled with fragrant pine,  
Wee dresses blowing on a line.

My work-bench is a window-sill,  
Floors to be polished . . meals to cook,  
With now and then a stolen peep  
Between the covers of a book—  
A hurried glance, for well I know  
How swift the morning hours will go.

And so my songs shall bear the print  
Of busy hands that knead and stir,  
The savor of an apple-pie;  
Instead of frankincense and myrrh  
They'll breathe of wood and bread and tea,  
Of this warm sunlit room . . . and me.

## Above the Timber-Line

The hills are crowned with glory  
And the trail is wet with dew,  
And something beats with tender hands  
Against the heart of you.  
There's something in the air you breathe  
That warms your blood like wine,  
For sunrise paints the world with light  
Above the timber-line.

The path winds high and higher,  
And the snow-clad mountains call,  
And your veins are filled with fire  
At the wonder of it all.  
There are deep ravines and valleys,  
Heights no man could ever scale,  
And little clumps of stunted spruce  
Along the Sky-Line Trail.

Glaciers rise glistening in the sun  
Against a far-off sky,  
And vagrant winds oft stir your heart  
Like music going by.  
There's health in ever throbbing vein,  
The breath of sun-warmed pine,  
And, oh, the world is hushed and still  
Above the timber-line.



## This Summer Day

I like such homely things . . . as smell of mint,  
Fresh rhubarb in the Spring . . the taste of tea,  
The crunch of wagon-wheels . . a lighted lamp,  
A friend to just fun in and chat with me.

I like old-fashioned things . . like purity,  
Virtue in women . . cleanliness of thought,  
Girls with clean lips and fresh, unpainted cheeks,  
The deep pink blossoms of the apricot.

I like an old walled garden, still and warm,  
Where I can dream and hear the skylarks sing,  
Share the sweet sorcery of bee and flower,  
Watch the swift wonder of a swallow's wing.

A sprig of parsley in a flowerpot,  
The taste of salted spray . . the smell of broom,  
Grey sleet and rain . . and then an open door  
Into the comfort of a fire-lit room.

Such gracious, lovely things . . and, under all,  
The tides of life that beat us raw and sore,  
The winds that harry us, the hearts that ache,  
Life sound and sweet and lovely at the core.

## Life

For this is life—this blessed throbbing *Now*,  
This golden-tinted morning—this today  
Whose rich abundance speaks from every bough  
If we just listen to the things they say.

For I shall never hear a clearer song  
Than yonder skylark's, singing from the blue,  
Or know a sweeter ecstasy—or see  
A richer purple than this pansy's hue.

For I shall never taste a lovelier breath  
Than of red roses blooming on the vine,  
Or sense a heaven nearer to the earth,  
Or grasp a clearer sight of the Divine.

For Heaven lies about us everywhere,  
And God is close, for every blade of grass  
Sings on the wind like ancient lines of prayer,  
And all the world is hushed to watch Him pass.

## Encouragement

To hear above the little fields of life  
The clash of swords, the dying hero's groan,  
To know that in the welter of the strife  
We do not fight alone.

To see beyond the curtains primly hung  
A hundred battlefields where people strive  
To hear at last the hymn of victory sung,  
And we awake . . . alive! . . .

To know that all about us, everywhere,  
The valiant souls of men go marching on,  
Strong in the shining armor of their prayer,  
Facing a wider dawn.

Oh, may we know that even common days  
Are shod with glory . . . tipped with points of light,  
That little homes like ours and simple ways  
Are precious in God's sight.

Oh, may we take the banner and the cross,  
Thy love a token and Thy grace a shield,  
To bear us on through victory and loss  
On Life's vast battlefield.

## Prayer for the New Year

To-night I pray . . that as the year goes by  
I shall grow better . . kinder, less afraid,  
And easier to live with. Often, Lord,  
I grouch about the way the table's laid,  
As if it matters how the dishes lie  
When there is bread enough to satisfy.

To-night I pray that, as the months are spent,  
I shall look ever in my heart to see  
If there be aught unclean—no evil thing  
To grow and spread its branches over me;  
But only good alone shall lift its head,  
And only kind and gentle words be said.

To-night I pray that this New Year shall bring  
No sudden riches . . only just enough  
For every day's small need—a warm, clean bed,  
Strength for the going, be it smooth or rough,  
And always, God, a light to guide and bless,  
And in my heart a song . . . . for happiness.

## I So Love Earth

I so love Earth! . . The soil beneath my feet  
Is gracious to my touch and passing sweet;  
The water, made of melted snow and ice,  
Sings on its way to some fair paradise  
Of cloud and mist . . of grey old twisted trees  
Deep rooted in the soil of centuries.

I so love Earth! . . the grey wind-bitten hill,  
The frail attire of a daffodil,  
The strange grey shape of rocks . . the sheen of dew,  
Church bells that call across the town to you;  
Tall ships, unloading rice and bales of tea,  
Crusted with salt and smelling of the sea.

I so love Earth! . . old folk with faded eyes,  
Women with understanding sweet and wise,  
Good to the poor and faithful to a friend,  
Men with old plows and little fields to tend—  
These . . . and the sure belief that, come what will,  
The Earth moves on . . His promise to fulfill.

## Growing Old

Oh, let me mellow with the years  
And not grow old and stale!  
Let me go joyfully and glad  
Down life's wide sun-warmed trail—,  
A heart to trust . . a faith to see  
How gracious older years can be.

Oh, let me mellow with the years!  
Time sweetens many things,  
So let her wisdom make me wise,  
Strengthen my spirit's wings;  
Let me be thankful just for these:  
Old houses . . little yards . . and trees.

So many things are beautiful  
When age has mellowed them—  
Old lace and ivory and wood,  
A rare old treasured gem.  
So may I grow like these—to hold  
Beauty and grace . . when I am old.

## Thankful for What?

Not for the mighty world, oh, Lord, tonight,  
Nations and kingdoms in their fearful might;  
Let me be glad the kettle gently sings,  
Let me be thankful . . just for little things.

Thankful for simple food and supper spread,  
Thankful for shelter and a warm, clean bed,  
For little joyful feet that gladly run  
To welcome me when my day's work is done.

Thankful for friends who share my joy and mirth,  
Glad for the warm, sweet fragrance of the earth,  
For golden pools of sunlight on the floor,  
For peace that bends above my lowly door.

For little friendly days that slip away  
With only meals and bed, and work and play,  
A rocking-chair and kindly shining light,  
For little things . . . let me be glad tonight.

## It Wouldn't be Fall

It wouldn't be Fall without smoke and haze,  
The hills all bare and the trees ablaze,  
The crickets' song and dry, hot sod,  
And wheat-fields bordered with goldenrod.

It wouldn't be Fall without laden boughs  
And the warm, sweet fragrance of open mows,  
Cluttered stooks, and the smell of grain,  
Rich like the perfume after rain.

It wouldn't be Fall without frost at night,  
And birds, all ready to make their flight,  
Chattering around in the garden bare,  
Filling with song the golden air.

It wouldn't be Fall without sodden leaves  
And the drip of rain in the wooden eaves,  
Purple asters to nod and fold,  
Wide old gardens and fields of gold;

The feel in your veins of changing things,  
The sound in the night of hurrying wings,  
Scarlet vines on the garden wall—  
Had we not these . . . it wouldn't be Fall.



## Inner Life

For we are more than just the thing we seem,  
More than a little waking and a dream:  
This life that seems so commonplace to me  
Is woven into all eternity!  
The little happenings that make a day  
Are born of God and shall not pass away.

The fire when laid . . the supper-table spread,  
Even the simple breaking of the bread,  
Are symbols of diviner things that lie  
Close to our inner selves and will not die—  
The roots of life beneath the commonplace  
Weaving their tendrils through the human race.

As long as life goes on . . there will be these:  
Warm clodded earth, and blossom-laden trees,  
East winds and rain . . and flocks upon a hill,  
The fresh, sweet wonder of the daffodil;  
And over all . . and under all . . and through,  
The mind of God made manifest in you.

## A Born Farmer

He loved his fields, the grey old pasture-lot,  
Bordered with spruce and fir and singing pine;  
The spring below the hill, . . the little creek  
That seemed to hug the ragged timber-line;  
The orchard on the slope, where all day long  
The very branches were alive with song.

He loved his dim old barns, . . the weathered beams,  
Hewed with an adze from virgin spruce, and firm;  
The fragrant loft . . where pigeons made their home,  
Old stalls where little new-born creatures stir  
And draw their first sweet breath, and are alive,  
(For golden honey-bees about their hive.)

He loved his home . . the very walls and floors  
Whispered to him a language that he knew;  
The worn old steps . . the pump beside the door,  
The cool old milk-house with its sheltering yew,  
Whose branches cast their lacy dappled shade  
Like carpets on the cool sweet grasses laid.

All these he loved—the old good things of earth,  
The dumb sweet-scented cattle in the stall,  
Little blind kittens mewing in the dark,  
(A thin old mother in a woolen shawl),  
The miracle of dawn . . old twisted trees—  
His soul bowed down its head . . and worshipped  
these.

## We Thank Thee

We thank Thee, Lord, for lovely things  
That really have no use at all,  
For crocuses and fairy rings,  
The smoky haze of early Fall,  
The mirage on a lonely plain,  
The smell of flowers after rain.

For silver willows by a slough,  
Casting their image faint and still  
On the clear water's polished blue;  
For poplars on a windy hill  
That bend and rock the long night through:—  
Thou know'st the way that poplars do.

For citrons in a sun-drenched field,  
A creaking windlass by the well,  
Ripe ears of corn . . the smell of sage,  
Bright calico that pedlars sell;  
A dim old stable made of sod,  
The yellow sheen of goldenrod.

Wild mustard in a field of wheat,  
An old man plodding down a lane,  
A neighbor's light across the snow,  
The quiet easing up of pain.  
For timid bird with fluttering wings—  
E'en thank Thee, Lord, . . for useless things.

## When I Come Home at Night

When I come home at night the house is sweet  
With the warm feel of love and willing feet;  
The Little Comrade runs to take my coat—  
Her voice holds such a cheerful laughing note!  
She sets my slippers by the oven door,  
Picks up a few odd papers from the floor.

The table glows . . the cat walks here and there,  
Lifting her feet with such a stately air  
As if she knew the nicest time of day.  
Was still to come . . with supper cleared away,  
And we, around the fireside safe and warm,  
Shut in from all the lonely night and storm.

Grandma just rocks with old contented grace  
(She gives an air of comfort to the place),  
Her wrinkled hands, like fine old weathered silk,  
Lie idle in her lap, as warm as milk,  
Blue-veined like marble, there against her dress,  
With her old silv'ry hair . . and loveliness.

As we grow older . . how the little things  
Loom big unto our sight! . . For living brings  
A kindly tolerance . . the fret and fuss  
Beat vainly on the kinder souls of us.  
We are content with less . . our small desires  
Only the warmth of love . . and little fires.

## Spring Comes

Spring has such gracious hands! . . She brings  
The essence of all lovely things,  
New petalled gorse . . the flame of broom,  
Warm sunlight in a quiet room,  
Small leaves unfolding every hour,  
The still, sweet opening of a flower.

Spring has such lovely hands! . . She yields  
Her warmth and beauty to the fields,  
Wooing the Earth with wind and rain,  
Clothing the hills with green again.  
New lambs with wee, unsteady feet  
New grass in pastures warm and sweet.

Spring has such willing hands! . . She weaves  
Her magic tapestry of leaves,  
Like a thatched roof above my head,  
And for my feet a carpet spread  
With woof of scarlet, warp of brown,  
Woven of moss as soft as down.

Spring is the quickening . . the birth,  
The resurrection of the earth.  
There is no death . . of anything—  
Life walks triumphant through the Spring,  
Trailing her glory like a cloak  
Above the heads of common folk.

## The Mother

My troubles are no longer mine!  
A little girl with tangled hair  
Holds in her dimpled hands the key  
To all my laughter and despair.  
I never knew what failure meant,  
How bitter tears could burn and blur,  
Until she asked with childlike faith  
For things I could not get for her.

My future is no longer mine,  
For it is bound and sealed and tied  
To this wee girl of half-past four  
Who skips and dances at my side.  
I find that every dream I weave,  
Each happiness I plan ahead,  
Holds in itself the thought of her,  
A quiet home and daily bread.

O Life . . . whate'er you do for me,  
Deal kindly with my little maid;  
Let her go down your sunlit ways  
With her gay spirit unafraid.  
Oh, may she never learn despair,  
The bitterness of wasted hours,  
Let her be glad as she is glad  
Here in the sunshine and the flowers.

## Such Little Things

Pale honey in a frosted glass,  
Strawberries in a bowl of blue,  
The table set with wheaten bread,  
The children sitting there . . . and you  
Bowing your head to offer prayer  
Upon the simple daily fare.

I love our evening meal the best,  
Our little family gathered near,  
Safe in the shelter of our love.  
(Isn't the baby cute and dear?)  
Her eyes are soft with sleep, and yet  
She never seems to fuss or fret.

I always feel at eventide  
A special thankfulness and grace  
That we have health and happiness,  
The comfort of this little place—  
Humble, I know, but safe and sweet,  
Like many here along the street.

Dear Lord, who once in Nazareth  
Lived on a shabby street like ours,  
Who walked bare-footed in the dust,  
Knew the sweet breath of rain-wet flowers,  
Bless these dear houses up and down  
The poorer sidewalks of our town.

## To the Old Poor

Pity them, God . . with their old, anxious eyes!

I see them every morning when I go  
Down to my work . . they carry shopping-bags  
Hunting for food . . ah, well indeed I know  
The thin, old purses, clutched so grim and tight  
Their bony knuckles stand out sharp and white.

How close they walk!—the slow old man and wife,  
Each finding comfort with the other near,  
Buying cheap bits of meat, stale loaves of bread,  
Watching at corners . . holding back in fear,  
Seeing the young ride by in vain conceit  
While they go plodding down the busy street.

Pity them, God . . whom Life has somehow passed  
(Death has forgotten them, I do believe);  
And so they go in their old-fashioned clothes,  
Blown by the wind, like wrinkled yellow leaves,  
A little shabby room . . . a lighted fire,  
Warm food . . a quiet bed . . their one desire.



## Fall

The last warm hint of sunlight on the hills,  
The naked harvest-field where Autumn spills  
All the rich colors of her glowing stores,  
Like Persian carpets laid on temple floors.

The earth is seamed with cracks and jagged scars,  
The cattle stand beside the milking bars,  
Waiting their quiet stable, dim and warm,  
Sensing the hidden coming of the storm.

Even the dog whines now with lifted face  
To come inside to his accustomed place  
Behind the stove . . (he'll snore, and maybe bark  
At some imagined person in the dark).

I like to wake and know the cattle sleep  
In warm, clean straw . . and in their pen the sheep  
Lie huddled close, their breathing sweet and soft,  
Mounting like incense to the dusty loft.

For our good land has meat and grace and health,  
The marrow of her bones her hidden wealth.  
A nation builds her walls on shifting sand  
Unless her roots are nurtured in the land.

## Canterbury Bells

A goblet made of sun and dew  
Of such a tender purple hue,  
With fluted brim and waxen stem  
(Surely the gods once drank from them!)—  
The precious brew that gave them light  
And wisdom far beyond our sight.

For here beside my house they lean  
Veiled in their leaves of sober green,  
A living chalice sweet and frail  
(The pattern of some holy grail);  
The bees go in like lords to dine  
Upon the nectar of the vine.

Oh, shining Canterbury Bells,  
Ring out above my garden fair  
Like church-bells on a Sabbath morn  
Calling the faithful to their prayer.  
My lawn shall be a temple then  
To heal the troubled souls of men.

## Singing at His Work

He sings above his saw and plane  
A love-song with a glad refrain;  
The morning sun, all warm and fair,  
Falls on the ragged shavings there;  
Beside the door-sill crude and old,  
And turns them all to shining gold.

He makes a chair, and for each rung  
A tune of happiness is sung;  
He planes the scantling for a stair  
And leaves his spirit graven there;  
Fashions a cradle wide and deep  
Where small new babies smile and sleep.

Under his hand the oak and pine  
Seem to take on a deeper shine;  
He lays the magic of his hands  
On little home-made stools and stands.  
He carves a lily frail as lace  
Above the oaken fire-place.

And so his work, with beauty wrought,  
Becomes the image of his thought;  
The wide old door, the curving stair,  
Are part of him, and seem to bear  
The print of careful hands that laid  
Their love on everything they made.

## The Song My Kettle Sings

I have a small blue kettle,  
A little homely thing,  
And when I put it on for tea  
It always starts to sing.  
It makes me think of little fields  
And hills all fresh and green,  
Of tiny streams that slip along  
Their mossy banks between.

It has a note of wistfulness  
Like flutes, all silver clear—  
Perhaps it was the piping of  
Some fairy trumpeter.  
It sings of quiet hidden pools,  
Of clouds and summer rain,  
Of the grey waste of winter seas,  
Spring in the fields again.

Bird-song and eventide . . . and still,  
Deep places of the earth,  
All come to me and sing again  
Beside my glowing hearth.  
I hear the piping of the lark,  
The sound of hurrying wings—  
Here in my room . . . they whisper in  
The song my kettle sings.

## Colors

Silver green are aspen leaves  
Shining in the rain;  
Golden cups of daffodils  
Line a shabby lane,  
Asters red as berry wine,  
Lilies frail as lace—  
I have rainbows by the score  
All about the place.

Willow-buds like frosted fur,  
Mullen leaves and dock,  
Casting shadows dim and sweet  
All along the walk;  
Crocuses and baby's-breath,  
Pansies by the door,  
Purple as the royal robes  
Ancient princes wore.

Colors rich as Joseph's coat,  
Warm as firelight,  
Shining through the fog and rain  
For my heart's delight;  
Almond blossoms white as milk,  
Seas as clear as jade—  
I am glad God thought of these  
When the world He made.

## Riches

This is my world . . this rutted field,  
Soggy with rain and dead wet grass,  
This wind-swept hill where cedar trees  
Wave stiff old branches as I pass,  
And in a corner of the fence  
Wild cherries growing green and dense.

This is my world . . this mountain steep,  
Ridged with grey rock and stunted pine,  
Snow-capped against a gloomy sky  
Above the ragged timber-line.  
How small the houses of the town  
Look, huddled in its shadow brown!

This is my world . . where mothers lean  
Across old wooden gates and talk  
To someone passing on the road,  
(Flowers beside the bordered walk),  
The welcome of a bright fire-place,  
Love shining from a wearied face.

This is my world . . filled to the brim  
With everything a heart could hold—  
Friends to be glad with me and share  
Warm summer evenings touched with gold,  
And kindly human love to make  
Life full and lovely for its sake.

## Three Beggars

Three beggars came and asked for food,  
Three gypsies clad in sober brown;  
One had a vest of scarlet gay—  
They looked like strangers in the town,  
And asked for bread with lofty airs  
As if they thought it should be theirs.

I gave them crumbs and bits of meat,  
A piece of crust gone stale and hard;  
They hopped around as if they knew  
The little walks about the yard;  
They chatted fast and furiously,  
Like women at a quilting-bee.

I'm glad I gave my tiny alms  
To these brown beggars at my gate,  
For one sat in the apple-tree  
And paid for every crumb he ate,  
With songs so sweet it seemed to me  
The world was filled with melody.

And one wee mother made her nest  
Under the wide protecting eaves,  
(I often saw her quiet eyes  
Peering out through the tangled leaves),  
And so my shabby beggars three  
Brought love the whole year round to me.

## To Be Content

Not much, you say . . . a tiny place,  
An attic bedroom, clean and sweet,  
A table with a yellow cloth,  
A window high above the street.

But from it I can see between  
The red-roofed houses of the town  
The shining cross above the church,  
And appleblossoms drifting down.

The clear, sweet arch of summer sky,  
A white dove feeding in the lane,  
A neighbor woman coming home,  
Ivy against the window-pane.

Frail smoke from cottages at eve,  
A brown thrush singing from the hedge,  
An old man spading in the yard,  
Trimming the garden's ragged edge.

Only a little room perched high  
Like a brown nest against the eaves,  
Half hidden from the passer-by  
Behind a screen of maple leaves.

And yet within its tiny space  
Dwell happiness and love for me,  
A sense of home serene and sweet,  
The salty fragrance of the sea.



A palace couldn't give me more,  
Nor money buy its priceless worth,  
A heart content with what it has,  
The gift of riches not of earth.

## Sunday Morning in Church

In the hushed stillness let me fold  
My hands, and let me rest awhile,  
Shut in this holy quietness  
That lies upon the shadowed aisle.

From the vast organ softly steals  
Music as frail as fairy wings  
Of flutes upon a Summer eve  
Catching the song the night-wind sings.

And all about me other folk,  
Seeking the way of truth and grace,  
Hungry for happiness and peace,  
Have gathered in this holy place.

And little rutlings mark their breath,  
Heart-beat and pulse-beat softly blent,  
And there beside the lonely rail  
The souls of these hold sacrament.

The morning of the Sabbath makes  
A sweet oasis, green and fair,  
Where weary travelers rest awhile  
In the hushed atmosphere of prayer.

And in the stillness, fold on fold,  
My spirit reaches out to see,  
Beyond the rim of this today,  
Glimpse of the Heaven yet to be.

## At Eventide

I'm glad I have a little girl to call

When dusk comes creeping down this quiet street;

I lean across the gate and wait awhile,

And listen to their laughter gay and sweet,

Knowing that soon . . so soon . . the years will fly,

Taking her far beyond my longing cry.

Doors open down the street, and mothers stand

Outlined against a glowing square of light,

And voices call to children at their play,

Bringing them in to shelter from the night.

I am so thankful, Lord, that I have one

To laugh and play at hop-scotch in the sun!

Dost Thou in Heaven call down to us—

Down dim, eternal roads, and stand and wait

To watch us coming up the tired way,

Holding the gleaming rungs of Heaven's gate?

(I shall not mind what Life may do to me

If evening brings a lighted door . . . and Thee.

## Joyce . . . of Course

I pick up books and roller-skates,  
I straighten rugs and chairs,  
I stoop a hundred times a day  
To pick stuff off the stairs.  
I scold and fuss and threaten things—  
You know how mothers talk—  
But she, just in her happy way,  
Plays hop-scotch on the walk.

The day will come . . . when I shall miss  
Her dear untidy ways,  
Shall listen vainly for her voice  
(I dread those coming days).  
The house will keep so tidy then,  
Prim as an old maid's tea,  
With nothing lost or out of place—  
Just empty rooms . . . and me.

But, oh, today is warm and sweet!  
The tide of living flows;  
A robin in the maple tree  
Sings every song he knows.  
There's laughter like a silver bell,  
And voices gay as Spring,  
And in my heart—oh, God, I'm glad  
For these . . . . . and everything!

## The Carpenters

I like to hear them talking at their work,  
Fitting the pieces in where they should go,  
Sawing off ends so they'll be snug and tight,  
Making their homes secure from wind and snow.

I like the sound of hammers on the air—  
The smell of clean, new lumber is so good!—  
Batting around the windows and the doors,  
Handling the pieces of the fragrant wood.

Scantlings for joists and sills, and clean new boards,  
Fresh from the plane, with bits of sawdust on;  
Wide planks for stairs and little quarter-rounds,  
Beams for the ceiling straight and newly sawn.

I like to trace the curving grain of wood,  
The rings of growth in fir, the scent of pine,  
The grey of ash . . . the sheen of golden oak,  
Color as warm as sunlight on old wine.

God must have loved the sight of growing trees,  
Since He has fashioned them with special care,  
And made them strong and beautiful for man,  
Knowing the burdens they would have to bear.

And down the centuries they stand serene,  
Clothing the earth with beauty and delight,  
Lifting old arms to catch the sun and rain,  
Whispering across the silence and the night.

## My Dreams

My dreams are little windows  
Where I can look and see  
A golden ship all laden  
With lovely things for me.

My dreams are little doorways  
To face a sunrise red,  
Where I can watch the world I love  
And plan for years ahead.

My dreams are wings uplifted,  
And, oh, I need them so  
To bear my spirit safe and sure  
Above these fields of woe.

My dreams are rainbows shining  
When stormy clouds are gone,  
A bow of promise given,  
The silver pledge of dawn.

My dreams are windows open,  
Flung wide that I might see  
Above the tangled ways of earth  
Bits of Eternity.

## A Dream House

I like a house wide-windowed to the sun—  
You know the kind that seem to have a glow—  
Flowers along the edges of the yard,  
Old trees with spreading branches wide and low,  
A bordered walk with pinks and Queen Anne lace,  
Daisies and pansies all about the place.

I like a house to have a homey look,  
Kind of old-fashioned (not too stiff and new),  
A house where birth and death have often been,  
Old walls that whisper in the dusk to you,  
Stairs worn with feet, and door-sills sagged a bit,  
Rooms that look cosy when the lamp is lit.

For there is more to home than walls and floors;  
There is the spirit of the people there,  
Intangible, unseen, but always felt,  
Brooding upon the hallways and the stair;  
The hidden thoughts, breathed out and given wings  
To hover over all these household things.

And so I want my home to breathe of peace,  
Of quiet, sunny hours all gladly spent;  
Life at its precious best, with naught of ill,  
Bird-song and eventide and sweet content,  
Where tired folk can lay their burdens down  
Under its kindly shadow still and brown.

## September

O, Moon of falling leaves! O golden hour!—  
The purple grape . . the aster for thy dower;

The warm, sweet-scented sheaves, all bound and tied,  
The amber haze that clouds the countryside;

The golden stubble, shining bare and clean,  
Old badger-holes with tiny paths between;

The hazy, jagged outline of the town  
Etched on the sky . . beyond the fields of brown.

And everywhere the scent of ripened wheat,  
The red of tangled briars at my feet.

O Moon of leaves!—the year's rich harvest spread,  
The sheaves . . the ripened grapes . . Earth's wine  
and bread.



## A Mother at Night

How could it count at even-fall  
If I had never worked at all?  
In a vast world how could they miss  
A little shabby place like this?  
How could it matter, tell me, pray,  
If I had done no good today?

My job is such a tiny one—  
A house to keep, a little son  
To wash and feed and send to school,  
(Not run by any rod or rule),  
A man to love and labor for,  
Mignonette growing by my door.

And yet I know were I to shirk  
My little daily round of work  
A little lad would not be fed—  
He might go supperless to bed,  
Or, coming through the cheerless hall,  
Might stumble in the dark and fall.

And so, dear Lord, I'll do my best  
And leave in Thine own hands the rest.  
I'll garnish up my shabby place  
That it may shine before Thy face,  
A lighted fire . . . a table spread.  
Oh, give us peace . . . to bless our bread.

## Vacant Lots

You wouldn't think a vacant lot  
    Could hold so many different things—  
A robber's den . . . a pirate's cave,  
    A shaky throne for childish kings.  
And yet this vacant lot next door  
    Holds all of these and something more.

Among the bushes at one end  
    A band of Indians dash about  
With painted feathers in their hats  
    To put their enemies to rout;  
With willow gads for tomahawks,  
    Charging the hill in yelling flocks.

And in one corner of the lot  
    Two little girls had quaintly made  
A play-house out of gunny sacks;  
    And there all undisturbed they played.  
Such tender things their fancies weave  
    Playing their games of make-believe!

Ah, grown-up world, if we might sit  
    At their small feet and learn of them  
Content and happiness and faith,  
    Enough to touch Life's shining hem,  
And find in Love the healing touch  
    That all the nations need so much.

## Forty

Now that I'm forty . . . and going strong,  
I've learned to meet Life with a laugh and a song,  
Knowing that nothing is ever so bad  
But it might have been worse than the trouble  
I've had;  
Learned to be thankful for life's simple things,  
Glad for the blessings that poverty brings.

Now that I'm forty . . . I can look back  
Over the sweep of that old beaten track,  
Laugh at old failures (such tragedies then),  
Live the nice parts of it over again,  
Count up the blessings . . . the losses . . . the tears,  
Wine of the universe—salt of the years.

Now that I'm forty . . . with life all ahead,  
Years to be thankful in, sheltered and fed,  
With courage and fortitude born of the fray,  
Life just beginning . . . dawn on the way;  
Glad for the years that have given me grace  
To stand here today and look Life in the face.

## Eve Created

What breathless morning on the sunlit hills—  
A white, still dawn, and EVE the MOTHER born!  
What golden music all Creation spills  
To fill the waiting glory of the morn!

She stands serene, unknown aught grief or pain,  
Her vital body fertile as the earth:  
Spirit and flesh made one . . . forever twain  
She treads alone the shadow-land of birth.

The seed of man . . . the fountain of the race,  
One with the sea and earth, the eternal sod,  
Her fragrant hair, her lifted lovely face,  
Wakened to being . . . by the breath of God.

And still triumphantly she wields her power,  
Her oneness with the vast and still Unseen;  
Still bears her young . . . and in her anguished hour  
Reaches her hands across the veil between.

## Getting Ready for Winter

An old blue saucepan sitting in the yard,  
Where hens come up to drink with lifted face,  
New stacks of hay, tied down with knotted ropes,  
A few deep furrows plowed to drain the place.

The stable cleaned and bedded down with straw,  
A brooding hen, with glittering greenish eyes,  
A new calf sleeping in an empty stall,  
Clouds blowing up against the sullen skies.

A frozen clump of thistles by the well,  
New weather-stripping on the kitchen door,  
Shovels and forks hung up against the barn,  
Fat gophers putting in their winter's store.

The plows and binders set in tidy rows,  
The empty, soundless fields of tarnished gold,  
While little tufted seeds go floating by,  
Seeking a tiny bed before the cold.

There is a hush upon the waiting land,  
Fine spears of frost lie on the rutted ground,  
Grey hooded sparrows hop about the barn,  
A flock of geese go by without a sound.

There is a rich fulfilment in the land,  
A blessed peace of needed work well done,  
While Nature sits with empty folded hands  
Like an old mother nodding in the sun.

## The Holy Land

I like to think the same wide fields of brown  
Lie warm and fragrant in the throbbing night,  
The friendly hills still hug the little town  
And stars look softly down with twinkling light,  
As when a rude old stable, dim and warm,  
Sheltered the Saviour from the night and storm.

I like to think that little houses still  
Have friendly hearths and women smiling there,  
While shepherds keep their flocks upon a hill  
With quiet dogs mayhap their watch to share,  
And drowsy bells to whisper over them  
In those old pastures near to Bethlehem.

I like to think that ancient olive trees  
Still spread their sheltering branches to the sun,  
That lilies hold their honey for the bees,  
That busy ants and golden spiders run  
Among the cracks of sagging, broken walls,  
And cattle munch their hay in quiet stalls.

I like to think that Bethany still sleeps  
Among her homely hills secure and brown,  
That there are fields where toilers sow and reap,  
Binding their sheaves close to the little town,  
That those old roadways, grey with dust and heat,  
Still bear the print of weary pilgrim feet.

Nothing is changed in earth or sky or sea,  
Small homes, or little gardens in the sun:  
Old fishermen still live by Galilee  
And mend their nets, and talk when day is done  
Of ancient prophecies still dear to them,  
Those kindly, simple folk of Bethlehem.

## Childhood

She does not know that rooms are bleak and bare,  
That poverty dwells with us all the while;  
It is enough for her that "I am there"  
To praise her little deeds, to sing and smile.

She does not know that heartache hovers near  
Above the place where lie her dolls asleep,  
That eyes grow wide and dark with naked fear  
And life seems such a tired trust to keep.

Sunlight to her is earth's most precious gold,  
Daisies and buttercups are jewels rare,  
A clump of mignonette is wealth untold,  
Her crown a wreath of flowers in her hair.

No banquet hall in all the bounteous land  
Has half the glory of a picnic spread  
Out on a shining beach, with sun and sand,  
Wind in her face, and seagulls overhead.

Oh, may our hearts be glad for common things,  
Whitecaps at sea and tattered driftwood piled,  
Finding in these the peace that Heaven brings.  
Grant us the simple wisdom of a child.



## Trees

Old, patient trees that stand against the night,  
Among their branches magic music sings,  
A worn old harp, where all the winds of earth  
Boast once again of their forgotten springs.

And when the leaves are gone and branches bared,  
A hundred grey deserted nests are shown,  
Hanging like empty baskets in the air  
When all their feathered families are flown.

Moss grows like shining velvet spiked with stars  
On the north side, to deck its rutted bark,  
Where soft old ivy clings around the roots  
And lifts up curly fingers in the dark.

Patient old trees, like sentinels they stand,  
Part of the quiet earth, the fragrant night;  
God's loveliest handiwork, they spread their arms  
To catch the glory of the eternal light.

## The Faithful Few

Wherever you go and whatever you do  
Always finding them, the faithful few,  
Who stick when the others are tired and gone,  
The little handful who carry on,  
Drab and weary, but grit to the core,  
Carrying the banner forevermore.

Keeping the Sunday-school from despair,  
Playing the organ and leading in prayer,  
Finding the money for books and cards,  
Planting trees in parsonage yards,  
Helping the preacher through thick and thin,  
Doing their bit with a cheerful grin.

Always you'll find them at church affairs  
Bringing in water and extra chairs,  
Giving a hand at the carving, too,  
Just anything . . . they are glad to do,  
Washing the dishes with tucked up sleeve  
The first to come—and the last to leave.

Only a precious few at the best,  
But over the world from the East to the West  
They've carried His kingdom with faithful hands,  
Setting it up in a hundred lands,  
Teaching His word to the uttermost part,  
Holding the glory safe in their heart.

For as long as we've churches and pews to fill  
God will find servants to do His will—  
Plain little common-place working folk,  
Eager and ready to bear His yoke;  
Ever His kingdom with work to do  
Safe in the hands . . . of the faithful few.

## I Know God's Near

I know God's near, because I heard  
The full-voiced rapture of a bird,  
Drawing its beauty from on high,  
Its small face lifted to the sky  
For all the world to pause and hear,  
And so I know that God is near.

I know God's near, because I felt  
His presence with me as I knelt  
And asked for strength my cross to bear,  
And love flowed in from everywhere,  
A hundred avenues of light  
Reflected from His garments white.

I know God's near, because His feet  
Made little noises in the street,  
And someone heard, and stopped and smiled,  
And bought some flowers from a child.  
A star flamed out against the sky,  
And so I knew that God went by.

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I saw His mark on tree and flower,  
I felt the drawing of His power  
In every wind that moved and stirred—  
It was His breathing that I heard,  
And then a yellow daffodil  
Set Him upon a sunlit hill.

## Home-Loving Hearts

Home-loving hearts have all that makes life good,  
Safe in the shelter of their kindly roof,  
Kinship and love and gracious motherhood—  
These are of life the very warp and woof,  
The silver strands that keep the world in place,  
This age-old knitted fibre of the race.

Home-loving hearts have little plots of ground,  
The ancient kindly earth to nurture them,  
The sun to make small pools of fleeting gold,  
The starry sky to be a diadem,  
Quiet old streets where neighbors come and go,  
Old lamps that have a friendly yellow glow.

Home-loving hearts that never learn to stray  
From simple, tender joys of home and hearth,  
Who tread the worn old paths of common folk,  
Feel the warm throbbing of the ancient earth.  
Life is so kind to them who keep her ways,  
Crowning with peace the evening of their days.

## Building a Nation

It isn't battlefields and guns  
That makes a nation great,  
Or clanking arms, or marching men,  
Or panoply of State.  
It isn't pageantry or power  
Where Might and Triumph ride,  
For kingdoms are not built on war,  
Or nations fed on pride.

It's little homes against the earth  
Where peace and love abide,  
It's rugged hills and quiet fields  
Across the countryside.  
It's children trudging off to school  
Secure and clean and gay,  
Who own the right to childhood's land,  
The right to laugh and play.

It's stony fields and little brooks  
With hidden age-old springs,  
It's tender songs of youth and love  
That some old mother sings.  
It's love of home and fireside light,  
It's sweat and faith and toil,  
The souls of men who earn their bread  
From sun and rain and soil.

It's churches built on quiet streets,  
It's winding roads and downs,  
It's apple orchards in the sun  
And prosperous, cheerful towns.  
It's cattle on a hundred hills  
In pastures green and sweet,  
And happiness that sets a seal  
On faces that you meet.

It's something deeper still than this,  
Beyond our thought and ~~ken~~,  
The faith that sees the good that lives  
Within the hearts of men.  
A woman glad to bear a child,  
Protected by her mate,  
It's home and love . . . and little fields  
That make a nation great.

## Values

It doesn't matter much, I know,  
In all this world of grief and woe,  
That one small girl of half-past four  
Is never watching any more,  
Or runs with happy, eager feet  
To meet me coming down the street.

It doesn't matter much at all  
That I shall never hear her call,  
Or wave a bunch of wilted flowers  
She picked to deck this room of ours,  
Or hear her tell with sobbing breath  
About a tiny robin's death.

I've gathered all her playthings up,  
Her favorite porridge-bowl and cup,  
Her scarlet beads and old cracked doll,  
Her roller-skates and water ball,  
Wond'ring just why such things must be—  
For, oh, it matters so to me!



## Home at Eventide

We would be home at eventide,  
Old quiet folk who love to sit  
By peaceful doorways cool and still  
Enjoying the sweet breath of it.  
The shady street, the neighbors near,  
The sound of children at their play,  
A mother puttering 'round the house  
At the still-even of the day.

How good it feels to sit and watch  
Small happenings along the street,  
A game of ball, a little fight,  
A spotted dog with flying feet,  
Two women talking by the fence,  
With happy laughter now and then,  
Turning to fling some tender taunt  
Across the garden to their men.

Kings may have crowns to weight their hearts,  
For mine a cottage grey and old,  
A woman glad of motherhood,  
A sleepy child in arms to hold;  
A homely look about it all,  
A sort of gentleness and grace,  
A love that sanctifies and makes  
A HOME of this old-fashioned place.

## To a City Child

Oh, cramped, small feet that never knew  
The crumbling furrow's healing touch,  
The smell of Spring across the wheat,  
The dawn above the hills, and such,  
The call of swallows in their flight  
Winging across the empty night!

Oh, little feet that never felt  
The cool, sweet grass where dew had lain  
Under old boughs of orchard trees  
When Spring came back to us again.  
Oh, small white feet with leather shod  
That do not know the feel of sod!

Small, eager eyes that never watched  
A mother-bird above her brood,  
Making a hundred trips a day  
To bring them worms and bits of food,  
Or saw her teaching them to fly,  
And scolding them to make them try.

Oh, little feet, I wish that you  
Could go to some dear country place,  
And journey all the summer through  
With wind and sun against your face,  
Drink deep of Mother Nature's stores,  
Find Heaven in the out-of-doors!

## Little Hills

I like little hills that stand  
In a friendly farming land,  
Little flocks that feed and grope  
Up a sunny waiting slope,  
And, when all the land's asleep,  
Hills that still their watching keep.

Hills that know the linnet's flight,  
Hear the throbbing of the night,  
Warm, sweet gusts of sudden rain,  
April in the fields again;  
Burning gorse, like beacon fires,  
Trees, with broken tops, like spires.

Hills with little wooded vales  
Where the winding padded trails  
Find old water-holes and springs,  
Know the secret heart of things—  
Wisdom old as sight or sound,  
Hidden deep within the ground.

Little friendly hills, that lie  
Like a smudge against the sky,  
Lifting brave old furrowed sides  
To the wind's eternal tides.  
I am glad that I have known  
Little hills that live alone.

## The Old Farmer

Coarse as a clod, or so he seemed to us—

No thought above the furrows that he plowed—  
And yet he walked the very aisles of light

Apart from all the city's clamouring crowd,  
His gnarled old hands held close to life, and drew  
Some hidden manna from the sun and dew.

Close to the raw, wet furrows where he toiled,  
His very clothing bore the smell of earth;  
His red old weather-beaten neck and face,  
His rude old house . . . the roughly cobbled hearth.  
An old dog followed him from barn or shed,  
Slept on a braided mat beside his bed.

He seemed to be somehow a part of them,  
Grey as the lichened rock upon the hill;  
The sinews of old roots . . . the bark of trees,  
(Young April twilights shining warm and still)  
For he was kin to them . . . his soul and theirs  
Met in the silence of unuttered prayers.

## My Garden

Isn't mint nice, and mignonette,  
And lavender against the walk?  
I always love a bit of sage,  
The ferny leaves of common dock.  
A garden seems to hold so much  
That you can smell and love and touch.

I like small clumps of daffodils,  
Like yellow candles all aglow,  
And marigolds against the fence,  
Petunias nodding in a row,  
With baby's-breath like bridal lace  
To deck one corner of the place.

And pansies always seem to me  
Like little faces lifted up  
To catch the sunlight and the rain.  
Perhaps a fairy came to sup  
The tiny drops of dew that shone  
In the pale wonder of the dawn!

And wouldn't life be poor and bare  
Without these small familiar things—  
Flowers beside a garden wall,  
A tiny bird with fluttering wings?  
For dear backyards just seem to me  
The place where Heaven ought to be.

## To an Old Nickel

I wonder how many loaves of bread  
And how many ice-cream cones you've bought,  
How many hundred spools of thread,  
How many lessons of thrift you've taught?  
Your sides are shiny and smooth and bare,  
But you're counted a nickel anywhere.

Did you ever lie in a lean old purse  
While someone fearfully counted you?  
Such a small bit in a shaking hand,  
A thin old nickel . . . a dime or two,  
Clutching you close in a frightened way,  
Hunger stalking so close that day.

And maybe you rode with the rich and great,  
And he laughed at you and your paltry worth,  
But he didn't know how much you meant  
To the humble and needy poor of earth—  
A cup of milk or a frosted bun  
For a child who played in the morning sun.

Though you're worn and shabby and sadly bent  
You'd still buy a lolly-pop gay and sweet,  
A loaf of bread at the corner shop,  
A candle to light at the Virgin's feet.  
For a widow's mite in a temple hall  
Was counted the greatest gift of all.

## Small Deeds

They pass unnoticed in a busy world,

These little fragrant deeds that women do  
To help each other through a weary day—

A nod and smile . . . a cheery word or two.  
The sudden mist of tears upon a face  
Changes the very outlook of the place.

A little gift of something you have baked,  
An end of cake, a loaf of new-made bread,  
A new book loaned . . . a pattern gladly shared,  
And one discouraged heart is comforted,  
The road made easier for weary feet,  
Love dwelling here upon this quiet street.

One woman made a gift of perfume rare,  
Washed Someone's tired feet with cooling tears  
Two thousand years ago . . . and yet today  
The fragrance breathes warm love across the years.  
We see old tables set and casements wide,  
A woman kneeling at the Master's side.

Small loving deeds, like dew upon the earth,  
A sorrow shared . . . a dollar gladly spent,  
A cup of water given in His name,  
Become at once a shining sacrament.  
There is no gloom for me . . . no rain or shine  
If friendly hands reach out to rest in mine.

## After Holidays.

The best part of holidays  
Is the coming home;  
Happy feet are they that turn  
From the world to roam.  
Just the first small glimpse you get  
Seems to thrill you through  
As your house among the trees,  
Smiling, welcomes.

Coming home to plants and things  
On the window-sill,  
Same old row of poplar trees  
There against the hill.  
Rooms look kind of cozy-like  
At the dusk of day.  
Seems we think more of the place  
Since we've been away.

Coming home to school and work  
(Dear old routine things),  
Health in every pulsing vein—  
Seem to move on wings.  
Dear familiar rooms and beds,  
Fireplace and den.  
Holidays are wonderful . . . . .  
When you're home again.



## The First Born

No star appeared to mark your lowly birth,  
The coming of your baby soul to earth;  
No heralds sang of your nativity,  
And yet, O heart, the angels sang for me!

No wise men came from distant, far-off lands  
To lay their gifts in crumpled baby hands,  
And yet beside your tiny home-made cot  
Was greatest gift of all . . the love you brought.

No shepherds came with wondering, dazzled sight  
To find a child proclaimed by hosts of light,  
Yet, you within my arms, I knew that we  
Were part of Heaven and immortality.

Only a new-born child with dimpled feet,  
Only a small house on a shabby street,  
But through the swinging of my door ajar  
I saw against the evening sky . . . a star.

## Things He Loved

Such homely, simple things the Master taught!—

Plain, common rules of sturdy human worth.

He spoke of neighbours at the close of day,

Of little children cradled by the hearth,

Housework, and women at their spinning-wheels,

Old tired farmers at their evening meals.

He loved old battered ships and glistening spray,

Warm beaches on a sunny afternoon,

Lilies among the grass, and rugged hills

(Dear homely hills he was to leave so soon),

Sowers who plodded down the fields of Spring,

Old muzzled oxen at the harvesting.

He loved the wedding-feast, the gay, rich warmth

Of crimson wine and laughter-tinted song,

The throb of harps, the lilt of happy talk,

Larks in the pasture-fields the sweet day long,

The synagogues where old men knelt to pray

And read their prophecies at close of day.

He loved old wood, the smell of cedar boughs,

The feel of fir . . the sheen of golden oak—

Loved the dear crooked streets of Nazareth,

The kindly, simple ways of common folk.

All these warm, lovely things He held so dear

Those golden-tinted years . . when He was here.

## Homesick for Earth

And what has Heaven, then, to offer me  
That I remember not the shining sea?  
And how in streets of gold could I forget  
Cool gardens drenched in dew and mignonette?

And how could any mansion give me more  
Than golden sunshine warming on my floor,  
My windows open to a starry sky,  
Hearing the voices of the night go by?

If they would shut me up in halls of gold,  
With pearly fences gleaming white and cold,  
I would be homesick for my quiet street,  
For springtime and the smell of growing wheat.

If I shall gain to Heaven's eternal place  
Let me remember wind against my face,  
And when I dream of earth . . oh, may I see  
White roses, washed in dew, that smile for me.

## To My Own Canada

Ah, might I give thee back an hundred-fold  
The good that I have known, the living gold  
Of warm sweet-scented earth, with furrows brown,  
Lilacs in Spring, their petals drifting down.

Ah, may I give my talents back to thee,  
Who gave me ways to love, the soul of me,  
Fed from the little fields where violets grow,  
Drinking from thee the best that life may know.

Ah, may I pour with eager, loving hand  
All of my richness back upon the land,  
Singing her beauty and her starlit ways,  
Loving her soil, her precious gift of days.

Who gave me little shady paths to tread,  
Gave me her shelter, happiness and bread,  
Dear kindly folk to be my blood and bone,  
The happy right to claim them as my own.

All that I am of sod and air and sea,  
Part of the fragrant earth that nurtures me,  
Back to her gracious heart my songs shall flow  
Singing to pay her back . . the debt I owe.

## Small Lovely Things

Little white nightgowns drying in the sun,  
A bird's last sleepy call when day is done,  
Old mothers talking by the chimney-place,  
Their wrinkled hands crocheting narrow lace.

Supper in kitchens warm with firelight  
Sheltered and safe against a stormy night,  
Gossip and happy laughter with a friend,  
The peace of rest towards the day's far end.

Clean little gardens fringed with waving corn,  
A caged bird singing carols to the morn,  
A pot of parsley on the window-ledge,  
Hot streets that lie beyond a tangled hedge.

Clean curtains, looped to let the sunshine in,  
Fresh-dug potatoes in a cellar bin,  
New cookies on the table spread to cool,  
Pale lilies growing in a quiet pool.

Little new babies with their crumpled hands,  
Dark petalled violets in low pasture-lands,  
Sunshine to dry a butterfly's new wings,—  
The sweetest bits of life are common things!

## My Ancestors

I do not know their pedigree,  
Their breeding or their worth,  
But this I know, they gave to me  
The love of common earth,  
The smell of furrows brown and wet,  
The love of sun and rain,  
Their gardens, sweet with mignonette,  
Will live in me again.

And someone nurtured by the sea,  
Who loved her wind and spray,  
Passed down across the years to me  
The joy that's mine today.  
For I can smell the salty breath  
When quiet tides are low  
Because some person living there  
Had loved it long ago.

Because some unremembered soul  
Was glad of firelight  
I am content with little rooms  
That shut me from the night.  
And when I hear the dawn come up,  
All stormy from the sea,  
A thankful fisherman at dawn  
Is glad again in me.

For songs that beat against my heart,  
From some dim fountain fed,  
Were her's before she went to live  
Among the quiet dead.  
And crops that ripen in the sun  
Their golden gracious yields  
Are some dim father's of the race  
Who tended little fields.

And so this soul and blood of me  
Are just a living link  
That's welded in the race of men  
Who live and move and think.  
And all that's fine and good and clean,  
The substance and the sum,  
A part of all who went before,  
The seed of all to come.

## Infinite

I am so small to be remembered thus,  
In vast, uncounted worlds to be a part,  
An atom, yet Creation called to me,  
And I was numbered by a loving Heart.

And He who rules the deep with love divine  
Set to still music all its measured bars,  
Gave me a soul that I might call to Him,  
Groping for light . . . amid a million stars.

Ageless, eternal, yet He gave me Time,  
With little months and days to reckon by,  
Fashioned the seasons in their little rounds,  
The steady, measured time of sun and sky.

He set His worlds like stars against the deep,  
Spread out upon the quiet floor of space,  
And yet in one small flower I picked today  
He left for me . . the imprint of His face.



## Prairie Bred

If you are prairie-bred . . . there seems to be  
A sort of fellowship that speaks to me:  
You talk of wind, and I can feel the sting  
Of drifting soil that darkens all the Spring;  
You speak of dawn, and I can see the sky  
Flaming with light to drive the darkness by.

You talk of wheat . . . and I can see it wave,  
And smell the nutty fragrance that it gave  
Back to the soil, like incense on the air.  
I hear the hum of binders everywhere,  
The red of briars glowing in the wheat,  
The smell of sod . . . the quivering tides of heat.

We talk of early times . . . and I go back  
To happy days when we lived in a shack,  
Papered with magazines! . . . I see it all—

Those home-made bunks nailed up against the wall,  
The sturdy home-made shelf . . . the water-pail,  
The lonely bit of trodden, dusty trail.

And though we find a kindlier dwelling-place,  
Where Nature wears a softer, lovelier grace,  
Still they are dear . . . those memories we keep,  
Old fleeting ghosts that come and haunt our sleep,  
Making us kin forever . . . you and I,  
We who have known the sweep . . . of earth and sky.

## The Great-Grandfather

He has no place or part in this today,  
His very bones are dust, his heart is clay,  
And yet we follow little paths he laid,  
Walk in and out through sturdy doors he made.

His hands have crumbled down to golden soil,  
And yet we reap the harvests of his toil.  
The trees he planted by the carriage shed  
Blossom and bear their apples warm and red.

His tired feet have long since found their rest,  
And yet the part of home we love the best  
Are the small fields he plowed and worked alone,  
The pastures that he cleared of stump and stone.

The well he dug and curbed with careful hand  
Still yields its clear, sweet water from the land,  
Bubbling up from the deep springs of earth,  
Old as the ancient hills . . . yet new as birth.

His brave old face forgotten by the throng,  
And yet his blood flows red and rich and strong;  
Like new fresh wine in other bottles poured  
His splendid strength in newer vessels stored.

He does not die . . . but somewhere in the sun  
Forever lives the good that he has done—  
The furrowed field . . . the budding apple tree,  
Bearing its fruit for children yet to be.

## My Dog

Dogs have no clocks, and yet he seems to know:  
The very minute he should rise and go  
Down to the corner where the willows are  
To meet me getting off the Upland car.  
He stands with such expectant, joyous glee,  
And smiles and wags his tail . . to welcome me.

Dogs have no speech, and yet he understands:  
When I am sad he comes and licks my hands  
To comfort me . . as if he somehow knew;  
Lies down and puts his face against my shoe,  
Content to touch my feet . . that I may feel  
His steady love, my unknown hurt to heal.

Dogs have no souls, and yet his shining eyes  
Reflect the clear, clean beauty of the skies—  
Brown pools of love that only ask a crumb  
Of all earth's joy. . . He serves us gladly, dumb,  
And yet he voices happiness and joy,  
Plays in the sunshine like a happy boy.

He curls up by the kitchen door to sleep,  
Faithful and near his precious trust to keep;  
Only a homely dog with shaggy hair,  
And yet it's good to know that he is there.  
No love is cleaner than of dogs that wait  
Patient and quiet . . watching at the gate.

## Poverty

Haggling for over-ripe fruit at the grocery store,  
Picking up soggy driftwood down by the shore,  
Wondering with fearful heart what the day will bring,  
Looking in bake-shop windows . . and hungering.

Hating to meet old friends, not sure of their tears,  
Piling care on their children, too old for their years,  
Sensing their shame, being outcasts from laughter and  
fun,

Growing like sprouts in a cellar . . and needing the  
sun.

Clutching their thin old purses that fray at the end,  
Hunting in bargain basements for gifts for a friend,  
Living in old damp houses that smell and sweat,  
Skimping to make ends meet . . fearful of debt.

Thus march the poor of the earth to their battlements  
worn,

Knowing no comfort—wondering why they were  
born—

Pinching the blood of a dollar, and sucking it dry,  
Lifting their gaze to the dawn . . . and wondering  
WHY?

## Ships

You ask me why I wander so?  
I cannot tell you why;  
You'll have to blame it on the stars  
And on the wind and sky.  
Today I heard a silver song  
And saw a ship go by.

A hundred voices on the air  
That mock my quiet day,  
Salt winds that whisper to my heart,  
Such happy tunes they play,  
So I must gather up my tools  
And follow them away.

If I should live in little towns  
That do not know the sea,  
But only pastures green and still  
Where cattle love to be,  
I might forget the winding roads  
That call and call to me.

Beyond the sea the sun went down  
And left a golden sky,  
So I went out to see the ships  
And hear the seagulls cry;  
But when I saw their swinging masts  
I could not say goodbye.

## A Shut-In Speaks

Ah, world that lies beyond my curtained window  
And little boundaries of my narrow street,  
Could I but know the joy of all your wonder,  
Feel sidewalks gritting underneath my feet!

Ah, might I be a beggar at the corner  
Lifting pale, sightless eyes to find the sun,  
A newsboy selling papers in the twilight,  
A woman toiling home when work is done.

To feel the throb of other folk about me,  
Just to belong to all my human-kind,  
Part of the crowd who laugh and watch at corners,  
Waiting for buses . . . leaving town behind;

Part of the human caravan that pushes  
Over new trails, forever reaching far,  
Finding new worlds beyond their small horizons,  
Hitching their swaying wagons to a star.

And yet, perhaps, in quiet rooms and gardens,  
I shall find hidden wings to lift my soul  
Far above streets and little weary pathways,  
Forever searching for a shining goal.

And so I shall not mind when others pass me,  
But wave gay greetings as they move along,  
Knowing that I am part of Earth's vast silence . . .  
Part of the throbbing music of her song.

## Home-Bodies

Content with little sunny rooms,  
With kitchens clean and bright,  
A rocking-chair beside the hearth  
And shelter in the night;  
The shiny stove and Dad's old chair,  
A mat beside the door,  
Gay flowers on the window-sill,  
A clean old painted floor,

She wears a starched red cotton dress,  
An apron trimmed with lace,  
Soft hair that makes a sort of frame  
Around her quiet face.  
She has a few old trusted friends,  
Her love is safe and near,  
A steady, gracious soul that shines  
From eyes serene and clear.

She makes such fragrant home-made bread,  
Such pickles and such jam,—  
She's always cooking something nice,  
Like spicy home-cured ham.  
Her garden is a friendly place  
Of sweet old-fashioned bloom,  
Where mignonette and marigold  
Are heavy with perfume.

Could life hold more than little homes  
Secure from greed and spoil,  
The quiet beauty of the stars,  
The fragrance of the soil?  
With heart at peace with all the world,  
Content with simple things,  
She holds within her quiet rooms  
The best that Heaven brings.



## A Girl-Mother Wonders

I wonder what my little bairn  
Will say one day to me—  
The little nameless one I bore,  
But not allowed to see?  
I bore her one still, bitter night,  
In sweat and agony.

And will her eyes be brown like mine,  
With shiny golden hair,  
And will they make her pretty frocks  
Like other children wear,  
Or will she have old cast-off clothes  
And dine on orphans' fare?

And will she learn to read and spell,  
And sound her letters out,  
Have skipping-ropes and paper dolls,  
And laugh and climb and shout,  
Or will she hide in childish shame,  
Half instinct and half doubt?

And all the years I'll hold it here—  
No other eyes may see  
The childish face I would not know  
If she should come to me—  
The little bitter, nameless child  
At Mother Mary's knee.

## Everyone's Kid

To other folk she's just the kid  
That lives across the way,  
Perhaps a nuisance when she gets  
Too noisy in her play.  
She chases cats across their yards  
And climbs each favorite tree,  
She finds old tins and broken cups  
And brings them home to me.

To other folk she's just a kid  
With freckles on her nose,  
Who eats a lot of bread and jam  
And talks and laughs . . . and grows.  
And yet to me she is the light  
Of every day that dawns,  
A bit of Heaven that stays with me  
And plays about the lawns.

---

To me, who darn a lot of socks  
And mend a hundred tears,  
Who listen to her childish woes  
And help her with her prayers,  
She makes the bitter hours grow sweet,  
The future glad and gay,  
And yet to other folk . . . . she's just  
"The kid across the way."

## Winter Fields

I love old winter fields—they seem to hold  
A sort of kinship to the wind and cold—  
The frozen furrows clogged with sodden leaves,  
The stubble with a few thin scattered sheaves,  
A plow up-tilted . . with a broken share  
(They just unhitched and left it sitting there).

A few old twisted trees that sort of lean  
Down the steep edges of a small ravine,  
A few thin cattle waiting to be fed,  
Humped in the shelter of a broken shed;  
A rim of frost along the water's edge,  
Old nests revealed behind a tangled hedge.

There is a strange affinity between  
Our homesick souls and fields of budding green;  
Something within us answers to the sound  
Of new life bursting through the quiet ground.  
And yet a frozen field where Winter dwells  
Sings in my heart like muted temple-bells.

## A Mother at Christmas

Thy birthday, Lord! . . The prickly holly tree  
Bears its red, bitter fruit to honor Thee;

The cedar boughs that twine about the stores,  
The scarlet wreaths beside the open doors;

A lighted candle shining . . warm and bright,  
Shepherds abiding in the fields . . by night;

Grey, huddled sheep . . and suddenly a star  
Shining upon the hilltop where they are!

The song of angels . . suddenly to them  
A lighted road that leads to Bethlehem.

And for the world forever . . God's new grace  
Reflected from a child's wee shining face.

## A Prayer for Wisdom

Oh, give me wisdom, Lord . . . that I may see  
The hidden path that Thou hast set for me.

Let me be quick to feel another's woe,  
(Wise to take gladly what the morning brings).

Let me be quick to feel another's woe,  
Wise in the way our troubled hearts must go.

Oh, give me patience, too, and quiet grace,  
To make a home of this poor, shabby place.

And make me cheery, Lord . . . there is so much  
In smiling lips and love's redeeming touch.

And when the day ends let me humbly see  
That I have walked its ways . . . in step with Thee.